DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 549 CS 215 557

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TITLE Four Children, Four Stories of School and Literacy: Ani, Caitlin, Ira, and Mark. Report Series 2.27.
INSTITUTION National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement, Albany, NY.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 96
CONTRACT R117G10015
NOTE 31p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Black Students; Case Studies; *Classroom Environment; Deafness; Early Childhood Education; *Family Environment; *High Risk Students; *Instructional Effectiveness; Language Acquisition; *Literacy; Longitudinal Studies; Low Income; Program Implementation; Reading Research; Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS African Americans

ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study documented the classroom experiences of 4 case study children from preschool through grade 2. The children studied were thought to be at-risk: Ani, a profoundly deaf child of hearing parents; Mark, a child of an immigrant family struggling to learn their way in a strange culture and language; and Caitlin and Ira, African-American children whose families are economically disadvantaged. On average, a day each month was spent observing the children in class. Parents and teachers were interviewed about the ways children experienced literature in their everyday school and home lives. Ani and Ira exhibit contrasting histories--Ani was the first of the 4 children to learn to read, while Ira continued to struggle in an impoverished urban school setting. Caitlin's story is one of academic success due in large part to her mother's sacrifices and continued high expectations. Mark was successfully bilingual at home and appeared to successfully learn language skills through first grade. Mark began to experience failure, however, as he entered classrooms that focused on isolated skills acquisition and deficit approaches. Findings suggest that assessing the impact of an instructional program should take into account the beliefs and assumptions that accompany the implementation of the program, the quality of the activities, and the opportunities that children have to construct personal meaning as a result of those activities. (Contains a table of data and 5 figures illustrating student work.) (RS)

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CELA

National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement

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1996

The work on which this publication is based was supported under the Educational Research and Development Center Program (Grant number R117G10015) as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Distribution is supported under Grant number R305A60005. The findings and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the sponsoring agency.

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Four Children, Four Stories of School and Literacy: Ani, Caitlin, Ira and Mark[1]

Anne McGill-Franzen, Cynthia Lanford, Barbara Gioia and Marla Blustein

In a recently completed longitudinal study, several colleagues at the National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning (CLTL) have documented the classroom experiences of a small number of case study children from preschool through grade 2. The children we studied are thought to be at-risk: a deaf child of hearing parents; children of immigrant families struggling to learn their way in a strange culture and language; and minority children whose families are economically disadvantaged. Indeed, even as second graders, several of the children have not learned to read. Yet we have found a great deal of diversity in the support offered to children by families and schools. In these brief portraits of four of those children, we relate their classroom experiences to children's development of literacy and literary understandings.

The analytical framework for interpreting our observations draws upon the work of Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991), who found that classrooms offering high instructional support in literacy to low-income children could compensate for an impoverished home environment. By the same token, heroic efforts on the part of parents in the Snow, et al. study could not help children maintain even an average level of achievement when the children experienced two years in a row of mediocre literacy instruction in the classroom. Our longitudinal study is also influenced by sociolinguists, such as Green, Kantor, and Rogers (1991), and Florio-Ruane (1991), who hold that children's day-by-day experiences within particular classroom communities shape their cumulative understandings of the uses, purposes, and possibilities of written language. Likewise, year after year in the same school, teachers and children relate to each other in particular ways and construct institutional contexts for understanding development.

We have followed the children for four years as they made the transition from grade to grade, and sometimes from school to school. We spent, on average, a day each month, observing them in class, talking with them about their reading and writing, collecting samples of their school work, and documenting their development as literate individuals. We talked with teachers and parents about the ways children experienced literature in their everyday

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[1]An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the New York State Reading Association, Kiamesha Lake, November, 1995.

school and home lives. As teachers and researchers, we wanted to explore how children experience literature, particularly in school, and what these experiences mean to individual children as learners.

To show their developing literacies, we have selected particular artifacts — photographs and journal entries, for example—collected over four years from the children's lives at home and school. Some of the children's work is included in Figures 1-5 in the Appendix to this report. We believe these exemplars represent critical pieces of each child's literary history. Likewise, we bring to the foreground of our discussion certain dimensions of the children's classroom experiences that show the impact of schooling on development.

In this spirit, we briefly introduce four of the children we have studied: Caitlin, Ira, Mark and Ani.

Caitlin is African-American and academically successful. She attended a preschool for low-income families that was extremely impoverished in terms of access to books. Since then, her mother, a working class single parent employed full-time, has sacrificed to send Caitlin to a parochial school. Caitlin's mother chose a parochial school because she believed it would provide more opportunity than the urban public school Caitlin would otherwise attend. The parochial school's emphasis on "the basics" helped to allay the concerns of Caitlin's mother and, in some ways, contributed to Caitlin's academic success. CLTL researcher Cynthia Lanford describes the explicit instruction of the parochial school as very traditional and "bare bones" but a good match for the print knowledge Caitlin needed to learn to read.

Ira, also African-American, was not so fortunate. Ira attended a racially, economically, and educationally isolated urban public school just a few blocks from her home. It is the public school that Caitlin's mother did not allow Caitlin to attend. Ira's great grandmother read to her and taught her to write her name. CLTL researcher Anne McGill-Franzen observed Ira for four years. No print knowledge was developed in preschool. In the years that followed, the school offered literature and books but little explicit instruction in learning to read and write. Whole class choral reading dominated the classroom, and by the end of second grade, Ira felt neither like a reader nor a writer.

Mark was born in Eastern Europe. He arrived in this country at 2½ years of age and learned to speak English in Marla Blustein's preschool class. Marla is a now a teacher researcher with the CLTL who has herself observed Mark in public school over the last two years. Looking back at Mark's achievements in preschool, Marla views his subsequent school experiences as unsupportive of his promise as a language learner. Even though he is the only second grader who is bilingual and bi-cultural in Russian and English, Mark has been identified by his school as language impaired. In public school, Mark rarely had the opportunities, which were commonplace in preschool, to listen to and discuss books with his teachers and peers, respond in terms of his own knowledge, and question the meanings he did not understand.

By contrast, Ani's school has supported and extended her development as a reader and writer. A profoundly deaf child, Ani is an avid reader and an accomplished writer. Middle class and Jewish, Ani entered our study as a four-year-old in a suburban preschool for deaf and hearing impaired children. Barbara Gioia, a school psychologist and CLTL researcher met Ani when she first enrolled in preschool. Barbara attributes Ani's success to her intense engagement with the language of storybooks with her family and teachers.

In the case studies that follow, we describe characteristics of the school experiences of Ani, Ira, Caitlin and Mark that we believe contributed to the children's literate development. We also contrast the histories and classroom experiences of Ani, the child who was successful in school literacy, with the two children who were not, Ira and Mark.

ANI AND IRA: CONTRASTING HISTORIES

In a world without sound, children who are deaf learn to read and write only with great difficulty. For thousands of years, deaf children were considered "dumb" because they could not hear or speak. Even today, deaf 18 year-olds typically do not read beyond a third or fourth grade level. Contrary to all our expectations, Ani was the first child in our study to learn to read and write.

At the beginning of kindergarten, Ani, like many 5-year-olds, was drawing pictures and captioning them with random letters or grown-up "scribble script." These captions represented ideas—ideas that, in this case, were explained by Ani in American Sign Language, using the syntax of that language ("The tree big," for example, in Fig.1). By the end of first grade, Ani was spontaneously, and in English syntax, writing what she called "fiction"—high-jinks narratives about a dog named Lincoln (See Fig. 2). She was reading (silently and with sign) between a fourth (reading comprehension) and sixth-grade level

(vocabulary) as measured by standardized tests; and her spelling was conventional. By the end of second grade, her mother reported that Ani was not only reading written language with sign, but she had chosen to read a favorite childhood story about Hebrew traditions, *Hanna the Joyful*, out loud, to her family, with her voice. Ani's accomplishments are awesome. To say that school accomplished these extraordinary achievements is to understate the support of her family. To say that school and family together, acting with shared purpose and great resources, brought these achievements about is to underestimate the role that Ani herself, with her "extraordinary passion for books," played in her own development. Nonetheless, if the support of either home or school had been lacking, we doubt that the outcome for Ani would have been so fortuitous. By the end of first grade, Ani had attained a level of written language proficiency that most deaf adults never achieve in a lifetime.

Ira was not so lucky. Of all the children in the longitudinal study, Ira was the most engaged in storyworlds. Ira loved listening to storybooks and always worked a strong female heroine (See Fig. 3, *Wonder woman rescues John Henry*, written mid-first grade), or a magic cape or glass slippers, into her oral narratives and picture captions. We were surprised to learn from her mother that Ira, at five years old, owned not a single book nor had ever been to the public library.

Ira's great-grandmother, an African-American woman after whom she was named, but who had limited contact with Ira, told us that she "didn't know what was wrong with that mother." Great-grandmother Ira graduated from a woman's college in the Northeast at the age of almost 50, after she had migrated north from the Carolinas, raised five children, and worked for thirty years as a nurse's assistant. One of Great-grandmother Ira's children, now a federal judge, insisted that Great-grandmother Ira give herself the educational opportunity that she had worked a lifetime to provide for her children.

Education was a legacy deeply rooted in the values of Ira's family. Ira's great-great grandfather was a schoolteacher in coastal Carolina where it was rumored that his children (including Great-grandmother Ira) were "so smart because he kept them locked in a houseful of books." Ira's great-great grandmother was a diarist who regularly sent notebooks filled with her poetry and advice to each of her children. Great-grandmother Ira shared several of these notebooks with me. We selected an excerpt from one of the entries that has a particularly bitter meaning in light of the school's lack of knowledge about Ira :

> Now you just take notice anything a pale child does. It's great. A pale child needs be encouraged. Never make one feel backwards about its efforts. Good or bad . . . Speak of yours . . . a dead silence. Speak of something at your church or school and their eyes seem to blur.

The school was completely unaware of Ira's family literacy. In fact, many school staff pitied Ira as a child "who had nothing." Ira's mother never finished high-school and was herself a victim of the violence and chaos in the community where she lived with her three children. In spite of the lack of books in the mother's home, and the poverty apparent in Ira's immediate family, we expected that Ira would find safe haven in the school and support for her literary muse. We expected Ira to be successful.

Unlike Ani, who attended a wealthy suburban school with a reputation for progressive curricula, Ira attended an urban school in an impoverished community. Ira's school was in the third year of declining reading test scores and was under state mandate to show improvement or risk losing its state registration.

After two years in school, at the end of kindergarten, Ira was still anxious to read and write; she invented spellings to caption her story drawings and she included *Cinderella* in almost all of them. Her achievement in reading on standardized tests was reported in the average range in kindergarten. By the end of second grade it had fallen to the 12th percentile. Ira no longer read ("I hate books!") nor would she even complete the classroom writing assignments ("Why should I? No one looks at these things anyway."). A poor school was more devastating an educational handicap for Ira than not hearing language at all was for Ani.

The conclusions drawn by Snow and her colleagues—that children cannot maintain average progress without the school's help—were supported by our observations of Ira's schooling and the consequences for her development as a reader and writer. Likewise, with the resources of her school behind her, Ani accomplished what we had only dared to hope for her, beyond our expectations.

Are there lessons that we as teachers and researchers might take from the classroom experiences of these children? Teachers of both Ani and Ira were using literature in their classrooms; Ira's teachers used a literature-based reading series in addition to trade books. There were literally hundreds of books for Ira and Ani to read. Teachers in both schools borrowed books from public libraries as well as the school's libraries to create themed units for reading and writing. What qualitative differences did we find in the literacy interactions in Ira's classroom and that of Ani?

We found a complex interplay of teachers' knowledge, beliefs and the resources available to them. There were significant differences in the ways Ira and Ani spent their reading and language arts time (See Table 1).

Different Instruction: Different Learning

Ira learned how to read new stories and new words by reading chorally with the rest of the class. Her teachers tried to monitor reading development by requiring children to point to each word with their fingers as they read. Teachers walked from child to child, helping them to keep up. Ira's teachers had no support from other teachers in their classrooms.

By contrast, Ani had a sign language interpreter at her side for all her academic work, and at least one teaching assistant in both the mainstreamed "regular" class and in the special education classroom. Both her "regular" teachers and her special education teachers taught collaboratively with other teachers in an inclusive classroom setting with cohesive curricula connections. Ani, for example, studied Africa in first grade: she read books and maps on Africa, talked about Africa with her teachers and peers, and wrote what she had learned (Fig. 4). Over our four years of classroom observations, Africa was never mentioned to Ira, an African-American child.

There was no whole group choral reading in Ani's class. Instead, children read self-selected or teacher-selected theme books in small groups, or created their own books to read and to give to others to read. Whenever Ani needed assistance, there was an adult to help support her learning. Ani spent a great deal more time than Ira discussing the literature she experienced in school.

Most of the children in Ani's class could read; most of the children in Ira's could not. The organization of Ani's class created more opportunities for teachers to assist students in reading and writing, and more opportunities for children to help each other, whereas there were few, if any, opportunities for individual or small group interactions in Ira's class, and peer support for each other was limited by their lack of skills. Reading teacher support in Ira's school was out-of-class, and although support was targeted to all the students, group sizes were large and the curricula was not related to classroom literature or writing. In Ani's school, the teachers of the deaf and other specialist teachers followed the curricula of the mainstream classes, using perhaps different books, but developing the same concepts and vocabulary.

Teachers and teaching assistants collected portfolios of children's work in Ani's classroom, and together, Ani and her teachers selected and discussed the "best examples" of her reading, writing, and spelling work. By keeping close track of Ani's development, her teachers were able to provide her with intensive and explicit instruction in vocabulary, spelling, syntax, speech articulation, and any other area where Ani might be experiencing difficulty.

In Ira's classroom, the only evaluations of Ira and her peers' development were the standardized test results, which teachers were under great pressure to improve. Year after year, Ira's teachers saw only declining scores in spite of their best efforts, and in the absence of any developmental benchmarks to challenge those tests, they came to expect that the children they were teaching would make little progress.

Table 1.
Qualitative Differences in Literacy Time
K and Grade 1: Ani and Ira

Activity	Minutes spent in Ani's class	Minutes spent in Ira's class
Discussion of stories	14	46
Choral reading	0	20
Assisted reading	33	13
Teacher explanations / questions	28	6
Composing	30	38
Coloring	0	20
Workbook	0	6
Off-task behavior	0	22

Changing Ira's History

We asked ourselves what we might do differently to improve the chances of Ira and other children who attend low-achieving schools. We believe that we must build on teachers' and children's strengths—the literature curricula that is in place. Our conversations with teachers in Ira's school revealed that until Ira and her teachers became overwhelmed by the cumulative effects of poverty, low achievement and lack of resources, they saw literature as engagement, as a way to make connections with each other and to other parts of the school curricula. We need to put teachers back in touch with children's development through small group interactions, curriculum-based assessment and teacher research. Whole class interactions limit teachers' knowledge of children as individuals and beliefs about what they can accomplish as learners.

Although the need in most urban schools far outweighs the available resources, schools do not tap into the goodwill and energy of their communities and families nearly enough. With curricula knowledge, parents can advocate forcefully for their children and community volunteers can themselves become a literacy intervention in the early grades. People like Ira's great-grandmother can help children make connections between literature and life, and can contribute greatly to a literate community and what that might mean to African-American children and their sense of themselves as a people.

Detailed knowledge of the development of individual children and the literacy curricula that they experience over several years of schooling presents a powerful opportunity for us as teachers to reflect on our practices and perhaps challenge our beliefs about what schools can accomplish. Oliver Sacks (1989) spoke of the tragedy of being cut off from full use of language:

> [I]t is one of the most desperate of calamities, for it is only through language that we enter fully into our human estate and culture, communicate freely with our fellows to acquire and share information. If we cannot do this, we will be bizarrely disabled and cut off--whatever our desires, or endeavors, or native capacities. And indeed, we may be so little able to realize our intellectual capacities as to appear mentally defective (p.8).

Although Sacks was speaking of children who are born deaf, the sentiment applies as well to children who are born poor and who attend a poor school. For Ira and Ani, the educational handicap was greater for the poor child than the deaf child.

A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE: CAITLIN'S SUCCESS

Caitlin's story is one of academic success. At the end of grade two she is a proficient reader and writer. Caitlin is able to read books above the fourth grade level, and she writes with fluency and conventional spelling.

She scored above average in national percentiles for all areas of language arts in the standardized tests she took at the end of grade two, with her highest scores in vocabulary (90th percentile) and word analysis (86th percentile).

Caitlin attended a parochial school from kindergarten through grade two, a school where most of the students were Caucasian and from working class backgrounds.

Credit for Caitlin's success is in large part due to her mother, who not only has high expectations for Caitlin, expecting her to become a lawyer or judge, or perhaps a pediatrician, but also has taken her to the library, bought her books, read to her, monitored her completion of reading assignments and worksheets (either provided by the school or purchased by her) and made a personal financial sacrifice to send Caitlin to parochial school for the "important first years." Caitlin's mother is a single parent who works full-time in an office job.

Credit for Caitlin's success also belongs in part to the instruction she received at her parochial school. Although resources were limited and class sizes large, the teaching provided Caitlin with the print knowledge she needed to develop as a reader and writer.

When Caitlin entered kindergarten, her story and book concepts were well developed. Caitlin could pretend read familiar storybooks with book language and intonation, and she could tell an imaginative story that included characters, action and dialogue. What did not develop over the course of her preschool years were concepts of print or understanding of the alphabetic principle—not surprising given the print impoverished environment of her preschool, the limited access to books and writing materials there, and the lack of explicit instruction. At the beginning of kindergarten, Caitlin did not know that print is the message carrier in books, and she was still experimenting with different ways to represent her own texts, variously using drawing, scribble-writing and letter strings.

Instruction during Caitlin's three years in parochial school has been traditional and skills-based. Using an 1989 edition of a basal program, reading and writing instruction began with letter identification, letter names, letter sounds, sight words, and then sentences using a combination of sight words and rebuses. Much of the focus was on students' completion of multiple choice or short answer questions in workbook pages and worksheets. However, despite about 90 minutes of language arts instruction each day from kindergarten through grade 2, Caitlin spent remarkably little time reading in school. There was little focus on

stories or the reading of trade books. Teachers typically read aloud from tradebooks selected by students for 10-20 minutes each day, but there was rarely time for any discussion. By grade 2, most of the reading from the textbook was assigned as independent work to be completed at home.

By contrast, Caitlin's teachers set time aside everyday for journal writing, and her journal entries over three years provide a record of her development as a writer. In kindergarten, the teacher seemed unsure of the value of this activity, and thought its significance was primarily in providing interesting reading for the children years later. Invented spelling was encouraged and the teacher stressed the importance of sounding out words when trying to write them. She sometimes provided a sentence starter; she often helped students as they wrote. As Caitlin observed, "I know how to sound out words!" and she did. Caitlin's journal entries in kindergarten were short: developing from isolated words in the beginning of the year to one simple sentence by the end. Caitlin had learned that print is the message-carrier in books. Her sense of story structure and language was evident when she created her own oral texts. Caitlin was puzzled, however, by a request at the end of the year to "write a story." She responded that she could "write words" and asked if a "story" was "like a sentence?" She then wrote her story—a version of a simple sentence she copied from the board for independent work some 2 months earlier (See Fig. 5).

As in the previous year, Caitlin spent about 30 minutes each day writing in her journal, and in first grade, children often had the opportunity to share their writing with peers. Caitlin was encouraged to use invented spelling, and students chose their own topics. Her first grade entries were considerably longer and she wrote in several genres: chronologies that referred to personal experiences and imaginative pieces where animals talk or monsters walk.

Caitlin's second grade class was unusually large—and the teacher soon gave up trying to have students share their texts. There was no audience for writing. Nonetheless, Caitlin's journal for grade 2 contains approximately 70 entries, and it provides some interesting information about her development of written genres in a classroom generally dominated by worksheets, skills and fill-in-the blanks.

The same genres appear throughout her journal, probably as a function of the teacher-given topics ("My Favorite Sport," "My Weekend," and so on). All entries are topic centered, and the linkages between clauses were never random, but relational or chronological. In a few of her chronologies, Caitlin's "voice" is evident:

> last night it was fun I went roller sackating at school when it was not over with mom said it is time to go and I didn't want to go when we got hom I was mad said to muyself I will never speak to my mother a gin but a the morinning [I] loved her again. (October, Grade 2)

The most obvious change in Caitlin's writing from the beginning to the end of her second grade year was that the percentage of words spelled correctly increased, even though adult standards of correctness were not an issue for journal writing. Caitlin's writing showed that she had internalized some of the writing conventions of capitalization and end-mark punctuation.

When asked to "write a story" at the end of second grade, Caitlin enthusiastically produced an imaginative narrative with dialogue, in the manner of the "Goosebumps" series that she said she so enjoyed hearing the teacher read, but it ended up as realistic fiction when the "ghosts" were explained away.

We began by saying that Caitlin's academic experiences were successful. There is little doubt that the hundreds of hours of direct instruction contributed to Caitlin's becoming a proficient reader and writer, in so far as proficiency is measured by tests. Caitlin did well on end-of-year-standardized tests because, as her teachers noted, those tests test "what we teach." Yet, despite being a proficient reader, easily able to read and understand chapter books of some complexity, Caitlin did not choose to do so. There was little opportunity to read in the classroom, and she did not choose to read them at home, preferring instead to reread the short, illustrated books that had been read to her since preschool—*Corduroy, Cinderella*, and rhyming, repetitive, and cumulative stories. But when given opportunity and an audience, Caitlin enthusiastically would read, discuss and write complex texts. Her evident enjoyment of literary talk allowed us to know something of Caitlin's literacy capabilities that was unseen by her second grade teacher, who using standardized tests and skills exercises as her measures, could only say of Caitlin, that she was "about a B student."

LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH PRINT: ANI AND MARK

Ani: Bilingual and Bicultural

Ani is a proficient language user. As the second deaf child born to hearing parents, she has had the advantage of access to a visual language since birth. Although her parents sign constantly at home, they also speak to Ani. With amplification, Ani is able to hear some speech sounds and her education has helped her to make the most of her residual hearing. As a result, Ani has been "seeing voices" all of her life.

When interacting with her deaf sister, Ani uses sign only, but she switches to simultaneous communication (that is signing and voicing at the same time) when communicating with her hearing parents and others. She has in effect, had the advantage of growing up in a bilingual, bicultural family.

Ani's home is rich with print and with story. Ani's mother reads to and with her daughter every night. She is interested in and responsive to Ani's ideas, listening as Ani draws connections between text and her real life experiences. When Ani and her mother come across unfamiliar vocabulary, Ani's mother "will fingerspell it, integrate it into a real life situation . . show the written word, and use illustrations to teach new vocabulary."

As a preschooler, Ani herself memorized a number of Signed Exact English (SEE) children's books from home, signing the text over and over again as she read the text by herself. She also valued the meanings about family and spiritual community that storybook reading provided. The first book that Ani read "with her voice" was *Hanna, the Joyful*, a story about a Hebrew family's traditions.

Storybook readings have also provided a forum for Ani to use language to elaborate her ideas. When they read together, Ani and her mother speak as friends or colleagues to one another about characters or events in storybooks, with Ani demonstrating considerable confidence in her interpretations. It is likely that these conversations have contributed to Ani's sense of ownership and control over her reading and writing.

While her supportive family undoubtedly contributed to Ani's growth as a literate person, a close look at her early school experiences provides additional insights about the factors which facilitated her language progress. In classes for hearing impaired students, Ani enjoyed the social nature of sharing literacy activities with deaf peers and deaf adults. During each year of school, the Teacher of the Deaf spent part of each day reading a storybook, using both sign and voice. Within small groups of only a few students, Ani actively shared in book discussions, making connections between texts as well as connections

with her own life, asking for clarification when something confused her, and expressing her like or dislike of a book. Her teachers encouraged a high level of interaction by responding in a positive manner and issuing invitations to comment. Her teachers saw storybook sharing as an excellent vehicle for language and literacy development. As one of the Teachers of the Deaf described to an observer, [when I am reading a new book] ". . . I am able to stop for a moment and introduce . . . [new] words because I wear two hats. I read the text aloud and I also interpret the text." Indeed, she anticipated which portions of text might cause confusion, such as those containing figurative language, and provided sufficient scaffolding to ensure comprehension.

Ani's preschool, kindergarten and first grade years provided her with bilingual and bi-cultural experiences. During preschool and kindergarten, Ani spent each morning in the class for deaf and hard of hearing children and each afternoon in the regular kindergarten class, always accompanied by a sign language interpreter. Both settings were filled with print, and because Ani's school formally taught sign language as a foreign language, both settings provided opportunities to communicate with peers.

Ani's Teacher of the Deaf explained that she had "to make up for what some deaf children may never get when they step out of this classroom . . . [the] language, . . . the experience, . . . the knowledge or information to even talk about [a story] . . . I have to give them all that on top before they can respond in the form of writing." She was extremely sensitive to the fact that deaf children have limited access to the incidental language learning afforded hearing children. She was also aware of the profound effect storybook sharing has on the language development of hearing children and she attempted to maximize each shared book with vocabulary and language lessons.

Early on in her schooling, Ani's speech teacher emphasized Cued Speech, a system of visually indicating where a sound is produced. Cued Speech makes invisibly produced sounds visible. In addition, Ani's speech teacher provided printed words and hand cues to develop knowledge of the connection between speech sounds, the way the mouth feels when articulating speech sounds, and the printed symbols that represent these sounds in reading and writing. Another aspect of daily individual speech instruction that facilitated Ani's growth in literacy was the inclusion of SEE. Unlike ASL or Pidgin Sign, SEE denotes endings and tenses such as -ing and -ed, which are not represented in the other manual languages. Ani's teachers felt that this particular instruction heightened Ani's awareness and attendance to the print details of standard English. This highly intensive daily tutorial provided scaffolding support for Ani to move between sign language and standard English.

All Ani's teachers clearly valued literacy and communicated that value. Ani benefited from the structured language interactions around storybooks in her special education class; she benefited as well from the mainstream teachers' beliefs in immersion in story and print and personal purposes for literacy.

Ani's mainstream kindergarten teachers invited Ani to participate in the same literacy activities as hearing students, and with the assistance of her sign language interpreter, that is exactly what Ani did. During afternoons in the regular kindergarten, Ani read along as the teacher pointed to words in Big Books and chart paper stories, and her interpreter simultaneously communicated these concepts in sign. Although some of the texts were related to themes which the class explored, others books were chosen primarily for a certain word pattern or story language. One kindergarten teacher said that big books were often chosen for "different phonic elements that are in [it]"—so that phonics instruction was "in the context of what is purposeful to [the children] rather than in a workbook."

During first grade, Ani remained with the same Teacher of the Deaf who continued to explore every nook and cranny in the language of storybooks, and for the majority of the day, she attended first grade with hearing students. First grade emphasized a literacy curriculum integrated with hands-on science work, map work, and texts written in genres different from the narratives so familiar to Ani. Her first grade teacher collaborated across curriculum units with the second grade teacher whose classroom adjoined Ani's. Throughout the year, and with the assistance of her ever-present sign language interpreter, Ani explored topics far removed from her experiences. She discussed her ideas with sophisticated, and often older, readers and writers, and these hearing children discussed with Ani—in sign language—responses to their shared texts. Ani read books with expository language structures and content vocabulary and she wrote using language that showed her growing control over these structures as well as language to express knowledge of her own learning (See Fig. 4, for example).

Ani's motivation to learn and communicate was greatly supported by her responsive teachers and the opportunities they provided her to "talk" with them and her peers about her ideas, her reading and her writing. In every one of her classrooms, Ani has been part of a literate community—both hearing and deaf. Reading and writing have clearly become more than just school activities; they are her life.

Mark: Bilingual at Home, Language-Impaired at School

In contrast to the strong support that Ani received with her language and literacy skills, the school hindered Mark's developing language and literacy skills. Mark emigrated to the United States, with his parents and older sister, at the age of two and a half. In the span of a few short months in preschool, he not only became proficient in English, but demonstrated an ability to use nuances in language, and idiomatic expressions, in a way that few of the American born students could. Although his mother was proficient in English, his sister was also just learning the language, and his father, even to this day, are limited in their oral English language ability. Mark's rapid acquisition of bilingual skills seemed to be fueled by an incredible desire to become an integral part of his classroom community.

In addition to his own motivation, Mark's oral language skills were supported by a preschool program that was literature-based and thematically integrated. Mark often seemed transfixed during read alouds, his usually exuberant and boisterous personality quiet and subdued. Yet, he never hesitated to ask questions, or openly comment and personalize his experiences with stories. Mark's engagement with literature, strong knowledge of written storybook language, and oral language skills, would have seemed to predict success in reading.

In kindergarten, Mark's half-day program was supplemented with a pull-out ESL program. Mark made "leaps in literacy," and by the end of his kindergarten year was reading independently. Also capable of writing short sentences and captions using invented spelling, Mark was "ecstatic with his accomplishments." At the end of the year, Mark no longer needed ESL, nor any other support for his literacy learning.

At first impression Mark's first-grade experience seemed to include a substantial amount of literacy activities. His teacher was using a new, district-mandated, "whole language basal program," for which she had received no training. Although it included selections of popular children's literature, the instructional program lacked any discernible systematic approach. All reading was done in a "round robin" fashion, with few students remaining attentive. There was little opportunity to hear stories, and discussions and responses were also frequently interrupted. Journals were utilized for reading response, but were rarely monitored. Despite the drawbacks of his first-grade program, Mark's teacher focused on his strengths. She described him as being an excellent and imaginative writer, "a cooperative and enthusiastic student . . . [stating that] determination and consistent effort on his part played an important role in his success." Standardized reading tests, given at the end

of the school year, placed Mark in the 49th percentile. According to the school, there were no indications that Mark would need additional support to succeed in second grade.

Mark's second-grade teacher used the same literature-based program as his first-grade teacher. What differed in this setting was that usually only the strongest readers were given the opportunities to read the more challenging selections. Mark's middle-level reading group concentrated on isolated skills acquisition. Mark's teacher read trade books to the class every day but incorrect interpretations during discussion, such as Mark often gave, were simply dismissed, and there were no observable attempts to have students use comprehension strategies. Although the teacher did provide opportunities for children to self-select books, Mark almost always needed this time to complete or correct worksheets. Mark also had few opportunities to engage in meaningful writing activities.

Midway through second grade, Mark's teacher placed him in a language support group, where he was pulled out of reading time to work with a speech therapist on building his skills. Most often, this consisted of unscrambling sentences on worksheets. Claiming that his "family did a great disservice to him by speaking Russian at home," Mark's classroom teacher believed this program would help him "learn to follow directions." In contrast to his first grade experience, his second-grade teacher had seemed to operate on more of a deficit model. Comments made during a parent-teacher conference were entirely negative, except for noting that he had "beautiful handwriting." At the end of second grade, Mark's standardized test scores had dropped to the 14th percentile, and he was recommended for a pull-out remedial program, five days a week, beginning in third grade.

At the end of this four year study, the issue that seemed most troubling to us was how a young child, who had exhibited so many predictors of reading success at an early age, had encountered such failure.

Although Mark's teachers assumed his language skills were sufficient to discontinue his ESL program, as more demands were placed upon him in terms of vocabulary, he began to have increased difficulty with comprehension. His second-grade teacher recognized that there was a problem, but in accordance with the school's belief that pull-out remediation was more effective, did not seek to assess or mediate it in the classroom. She assumed that his problem was an inability to follow directions due to his supposed bilingual abilities, which she believed were a weakness, and not a strength. His parents' beliefs about their roles in his education, and their inability to navigate the system, also prevented them from advocating for their child, even when they believed a pull-out program would be detrimental to his acquisition of literacy skills and abilities.

The school district's belief that whole group instruction was the most effective means of implementing a literacy program, afforded Mark's teachers little chance to observe his individual strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the types of questions and format used during discussion and response activities did not present Mark with much opportunity to monitor his own strategies.

There was also the assumption that a literature-based program would "work" for all children. In actuality, Mark had few opportunities to self-select materials or genres, for reading or writing, that he could find personally meaningful. Few chances to construct meaning, and personalize what was being read, meant fewer chances to utilize comprehension strategies.

Perhaps the most profound impact of the literacy program he has experienced in elementary school has been upon Mark's beliefs about reading and writing. This child, once eager to personalize and discuss text, and ecstatic to be reading independently, now looks at reading as a distasteful task of sounding out words, and avoiding experiences that might make him look "stupid." Meaning and purpose do not enter the picture. "It's just the ABCs." Writing, once seen as his strength, has become no more than a quest for neatness.

CONCLUSION

For all the children we studied, it seems apparent that it is not enough to simply look at the literature components of an instructional program, or the time engaged in literacy activities, to assess the impact of instruction on a child's acquisition of language and literacy skills. We need to also take into account the beliefs and assumptions that accompany the implementation of a program, the quality of the activities, and the opportunities that children have to construct personal meaning as a result of those activities.

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Figure 1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Once a upon a time my dog named Lincoln he was outside on a leash. Then Sudenly a other dog came over hername was mousie then they began to make babies! then when I came over I called mom! mom! come over here she came ouen atlast we had puppies

by Av'...

fiction

to: Barb

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Figure 2

Figure 3

I learned that there were white people in Africa and I learned that there were beaatiful cities in Africa. I learned that they have pretty churhes and waterfall and alot of dry land and waters and gardens.

Figure 4

I he dog and I can run
up the hill

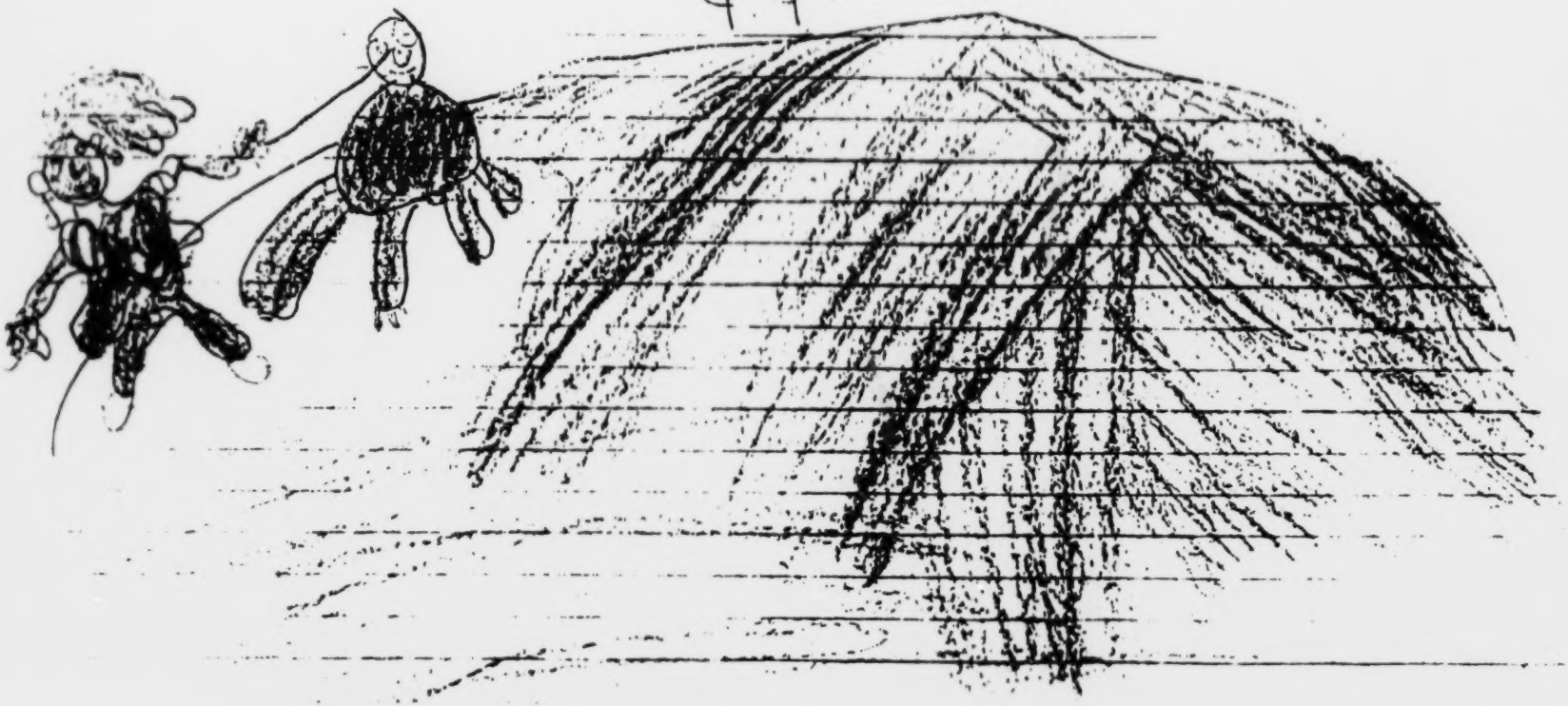

Figure 5